

## **Editorial: The professional content knowledge of the English/literacy teacher: Addressing the implications of diversity**

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When this topic was mooted by the journal editors, it was seen as having two parts: 1. The professional content knowledge of the English/literacy teacher, and 2. The implications of this “knowledge construction” for classrooms that in many places are becoming increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse. We saw ourselves as wanting to provide an opportunity to revisit themes raised in two early issues of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. In the inaugural issue of the journal (1:1; November 2002), members of the newly established Editorial Board and others shared a personalised account of the “state of English (Language Arts)” in their respective constituencies. The overriding question was: “What is it like to *be* an English teacher right now in this time and place?”

In September, 2004 (3:2), two of the three editors for this issue (Locke and Goodwyn), invited contributions on the theme of “Reclaiming the professional development agenda in an age of compliance”. In the editorial, we noted a range of educational reforms that had occurred internationally that we saw as having an “enormous impact on the nature of teachers’ work through the implementation of managerial organisational practices and other accountability mechanisms” (p. 1) We saw increased state intervention as putting teacher professionalism at risk through the adoption of managerial *technologies* that marginalised teachers’ input into the determination of what *counts* in terms of their own professional knowledge.

Back in 1986, Lee Shulman asked the question: “Where did the subject matter go?” (p. 5). He responded to his own schema by categorising teacher knowledge in terms of *content knowledge*, *pedagogical content knowledge* and *curricular knowledge* and its forms in terms of *propositional knowledge*, *case knowledge*, and *strategic knowledge* (Shulman, 1986). This issue was certainly interested in contributions that raise questions about the constitution of the English/literacy teacher’s professional knowledge. But we added questions that Shulman didn’t ask, namely: “Who or what controls the constitution of this knowledge” and “What are the implications for shifts in the locus of control for the practices of English/literacy teachers?”

The second aspect of this theme concerns diversity. A number of issues of this journal have addressed this theme in various ways: The second issue ever (2:2, September, 2003) addressed the issue of *textual* diversity, that is, the phenomenon of burgeoning diversity around textual practices which were become increasingly multimodal and digitized. Other issues have dealt with: “The challenge of teaching English in a multilingual or monolingual context (3:1, May, 2004); “Recognising diversity and difference: Challenges for English/literacy” (7:2, September, 2008); “Subject English in bilingual and multilingual settings: Embracing the linguistic Other” (8:2, September, 2009); and “Special issue: Culturally responsive research and pedagogy” (10:2, July, 2011).

Diversity as a theme can be interpreted in many different ways. However, a reason why the theme doesn’t appear to be going away is that many of us teach and work in

educational settings where policy agendas are actively attempting to impose a one-size-fits-all regime, often (and ironically) in the name of “raising standards”. As will be noted, in many ways, the contributors to this issue of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* grapple with the above issues, and in a range of educational contexts.

In their article on “Diversity in secondary English classrooms: Conceptions and enactments”, Ryan Angus and Luciana de Oliveira draw on a case study conducted in two, secondary English classrooms at two public high schools in the Midwestern United States. The study aimed to discover the specific instructional strategies that each teacher, Helen and Scott, used with their diverse student populations. Predictably, but worryingly, these teachers who had recently undertaken pre-service, English language arts teacher education, conceived of diversity in ways which were highly context-dependent, that is, rather than taking a broad view of what diversity can mean across a wide spectrum of contexts, these teachers were highly influenced by one or more salient features of the student cohort they taught. For example, Scott tended to frame diversity in terms of socio-economic factors, while Helen framed it in terms of “ability”. Unsurprisingly, teaching strategies utilised by these teachers, as well as the ways they identified as teachers, were found to reflect their conceptualisations of diversity.

Mustafa Bal’s narrative is in stark contrast to Angus and de Oliveira’s article. Ba; provides a fascinating account of what happened when he responded to an invitation to play a role in the establishment of an English Language and Literature department at the International University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of the difficulties and challenges of the venture in the post-war country, whose higher education system needed urgent reforms. What Bal draws attention to is the nature of the diversity characterising both the context for the university’s development and the clientele the university attracted. He puts the situation this way:

Euro-Asian culture clashed with Balkan culture; contemporary Turkish culture clashed with contemporary Bosnian culture; contemporary Turkish youth culture clashed with contemporary Bosnian youth culture; contemporary conservative Turkish youth culture clashed with contemporary conservative Bosnian youth culture; non-conservative/secular Bosnian youth clashed with their opponents; a minority of international students from Malaysia, Sudan, Indonesia clashed with all the rest of the majority student groups; private university culture clashed with unreformed state university culture; the Croats clashed with the Serbs; the Serbs and the Croats together clashed with the Bosniaks; the European Union clashed with Türkiye and the United States for domination and power over the land; university regulations imported from Turkish universities clashed with the Bosnian higher education regulations. (This issue, pp. 187-188)

What kind of English Language and Literature programme might be implemented to address this diversity? Bal’s narrative provides a glimpse into the decision-making process he and his colleagues went through and how their culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse students responded.

In her research article, Sue Dymoke asks the question, “Opportunities or constraints?” in relation to the availability of space for culturally responsive poetry teaching within high-stakes testing regimes at 16+ in Aotearoa New Zealand and England? Basing her inquiry in two ethnically diverse cities, one in each country, and drawing on the views of 24

teachers, a limited number of students, some classroom observations and other data, she forms the view that there are somewhat more opportunities and fewer constraints in the Aotearoa New Zealand setting. However, in both countries the character of high-stakes assessment regimes appears to be producing poetry absences in secondary classrooms and limiting both text selection and ways of teaching the form, especially in classrooms with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Dymoke suggests a range of strategies for addressing this situation, not the least of which are ways of enhancing teacher confidence in teaching the form and writing poetry themselves. She draws a number of implications from the marginalisation of poetry for teachers' professional knowledge and poetry pedagogy, as they prepare their students for high-stakes examinations.

There is some overlap between Sue Dymoke's article and Andy Goodwyn's comprehensive overview of "The increasing standardisation of English teachers' work in England." Where Dymoke focuses on a small group of English teachers and their views on the current state of the play in respect of the teaching of poetry, Goodwyn offers a wide view of curriculum and assessment reforms in England over two decades, drawing on a range of teacher surveys. He paints a picture of increasing constraints, state intervention in the construction of teachers' work, concomitant deprofessionalisation and increased standardisation. He describes teachers' work in the current environment as increasingly dominated by high-stakes testing, school league tables and frequent school inspections. He also investigates the two-edged sword of teacher standards and how, depending on how these are developed and by whom, they can be both beneficial and pernicious. Finally, he shares some thoughts about the role a national professional association (NATE in the case of England) can play in helping teachers "talk back" and restore their sense of empowerment and professional identity on a national level.

Writing out of the same context as Goodwyn, Bethan Marshall, in her article "Back to the future: A return to coursework explored", discusses the King's Oxfordshire Assessment Project, which took place in the UK between 2004 and 2007 and explored the use of coursework as a means of summative assessment. Her particular focus is on the six English teachers who were involved in the study, who were found to support 100% coursework in a curriculum that was standards-based. The article gives a series of indications of how, within the ritual of atomised standards-based assessment, a basis for holistic coursework can be maintained. In particular, it considers the importance of guild knowledge and the need for structural support. It also considers also some of the difficulties that can be found with this type of assessment.

The educational context for the article by Gail Forey, Arthur Firkins and Sima Sengupta is Hong Kong, described by the authors as exam-oriented and subject to relentless reform. The focus of their article is collaborative action research project involving a partnership between a school and university, which aimed to build a writing pedagogy for students with Learning Disabilities in the trilingual, biliterate educational context of Hong Kong. The project was established through interpersonal relationships built from the ground up between stakeholders from a university department and a secondary school. The article examines, through the eyes of the stakeholders themselves, four broad dimensions of collaboration: the relationships created, the resources shared, the action taken and the pedagogy created. Interestingly, there was a good deal of alignment among stakeholders in relation to motivation and expectation, producing what the authors call "research networks" united in terms of a range of common goals.

Mei-Ling Chen, writing in the context of EFL instruction in the Taiwanese tertiary sector, reports on a study investigating the effects of using children's literature and DVD films on adult language learning, a topic of relevance to other contexts for English/literacy instruction. The study employed a quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest comparison group design, with participants in the experimental group exposed to the children's literature and DVD films. The experiment was conducted for two hours per week over two months. The findings of the study indicated that alternately reading, viewing the film, and discussing a children's fantasy novel significantly increased the scores on the reading comprehension subtests over the control group who were exposed to a more traditional approach focused around an ELT textbook.

Though her article is based on the teaching of EFL in the Taiwanese context, Shu-Chen Huang's article, "Like a bell responding to a striker: Instruction contingent on assessment", has implications for the teaching of English in both L1 and L2 contexts. The article is concerned pragmatically with how recent research findings in assessment for learning (AfL) can bring about higher quality learning in the day-to-day classroom. It has two sections. The first is effectively a selective literature review of recent studies within Black and Wiliam's (2009) framework of formative assessment and looks for insights on how pedagogical procedures can be established that benefit from and resonate with this framework and with recent research findings in studies that in some way utilise this framework. The second is a kind of teacher narrative, showing how the findings and principles discussed in the first part of the article were incorporated into an instructional design for L2 (EFL) writing instruction that is contingent on formative assessment. This AfL unit made instruction contingent on and more responsive to learner performance and learning needs. As shown in an end-of-semester survey, learner response to the usefulness of the instruction was generally quite positive.

Based on a study conducted in a Secondary 1 school in Hong Kong, Icy Lee's study resonates with the work of Shu-Chen Huang. Her article, entitled, "Genre-based teaching and assessment in secondary English classrooms", draws on the same theoretical base in relation to formative assessment as does Huang's study. What distinguishes her study, however, is the trialing of an intervention that deliberately uses "genre-based" instruction as a way of helping teachers shape their formative assessment practices. The study sought to discover how teachers implemented genre-based teaching and assessment in traditional product- and exam-oriented writing classrooms, students' and teachers' evaluation of the approach, as well as factors that might facilitate or restrain the genre innovation. Although the limitations of the genre approach were noted (for example, its tendency towards formulaic teaching), the intervention was generally well received by students and teachers, who felt that the innovation had enabled students to improve their writing and helped teachers enhance their practice. However, the article also highlights a clash of discourses when genre-based (and process-based) formative assessment practices are introduced into a culture characterised by high-stakes examinations and a focus on comprehensive error-correction.

Korean academic, Jang Ho Lee contributes to this issue's overall concern with diversity by raising the important issue of the use of teacher code-switching in the context of target language classrooms. This is an example of conceptual research which begins by interrogating through a comprehensive but selective literature review

the assumptions that operate in the writings of those who advocate for target-language (TL) only instruction in TL classrooms. In his view, the four discourses he identifies as underpinning such advocacy – monolingualism, naturalism, native-speakerism, and absolutism – are no longer tenable in a world where bilingualism is becoming increasingly the social norm. Lee's paper goes on to review a range of classroom code-switching research within a sociolinguistic framework, arguing that teacher code-switching should be permitted as a legitimate pedagogical practice. From this perspective, teacher code-switching is viewed, not only as an example of natural bilingual behaviour, but as having great potential in terms of contributing to the development of TL learners' bilingual competence. Towards the end of his paper, he presents readers with a preliminary model of the effectiveness of teacher code-switching, which is designed to contribute to advances in both theory and teaching practice.

Kang-Young Lee, who is also a Korean academic, shares a narrative based on his own experience of 1: engaging with the problematics of intercultural English learning/teaching (IELT) within a framework of English as a world Englishes (WEes); and 2. developing classroom strategies which allow students to explore what he terms a "third space", which occupies the gap between students own cultural frames and the frames occupied by the other they are aiming to establish effective communication with. His narrative, entitled "Teaching intercultural English learning/teaching in world Englishes: Some classroom activities in South Korea", begins with an extensive literature review to support a claim that IELT is a pivotal contextual factor facilitating success in proficiency/competence among all varieties of Englishes in today's globalised world and that IELT be listed as a requirement for professional ELT qualifications in South Korea. He supports this argument but drawing on studies which suggest that the balance of power is shifting in today's world in terms of the "status" of particular versions of English and that there are voices which challenge the presumed high status of "native speakers". After an exposition of the various dimensions of IELT, Lee proceeds to show, on the basis of his own experience, how it can be realised in WEes classrooms. He shares with readers reflections on the efficacy of some of the teaching activities conducted in his classes throughout two semesters of 2011.

Intercultural communication is also a theme of Hsiao-Chien Lee and Carol Gilles's article, "Discussing culturally relevant books online: A cross-cultural blogging project". The article examines the process and results of a two-year cross-cultural blogging project conducted between American fifth-graders and Taiwanese tenth-graders, where the two groups of students used a blog to correspond with each other and share their reading responses of culturally relevant picture books. Working with two teachers, one in Taiwan and the other in the US, the researchers aimed to provide the students with opportunities to appreciate reading texts relevant to their cultural experiences, while using the blog to engage in authentic conversations with and reflect on the experiences of people from another culture. Data across a range of sources helped answer such questions as: What were the students' learning experiences, and what factors helped shape these experiences? The authors content that students gained deeper understandings of another culture, as well as the texts, as they were offered opportunities to communicate authentically with people of another culture. The students also displayed more confidence and greater critical thinking skills when discussing culturally relevant picture books.

## REFERENCES

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